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ABSTRACT

An orientation and peer helper program was developed at a public middle school in a rural community to reduce the problems associated with sixth-grade students transferring into the school during the school year. Transfer students and their parents or guardians were provided with a video and brochure that explained the school's services, programs, and requirements. In addition, a peer helper club was designed to match the transfer student to a peer helper with similar interests. The peer helper served as a mentor and friend to help the transfer student with homework, classwork, and social activities. Four of the 8 transfer students entering the school during the 12-week implementation period participated in the program. A teacher, the transfer students, and peer helpers met every week or 2 for 15 minutes to implement various activities, such as role playing and journal writing, to help the transfer students through the transition period. Transfer students, their parents or guardians, and their teachers evaluated the program after 12 weeks. The transfer students expressed positive attitudes about their new school, and had a better understanding of what was expected of them in academic classes. Teachers indicated that the orientation program was helpful and expressed an interest in seeing all transfer students participate. Parents also found the video helpful. All participants liked the peer helper club best. (AC)

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Improving the Transition of Students Moving Into Sixth-Grade Through a Middle School Orientation and Peer Helper Program

by

Nancy Pettit

Cluster 58

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A Practicum I Report Presented to the
Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

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This practicum report was submitted by Nancy J. Pettit under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

May 9, 1994
Date of Final Approval of Report

Georgianna Lowen mee
Georgianna Lowen, Ed.D. Adviser

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENT	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES	v
Chapter	
I INTRODUCTION	1
Description of Community	1
Writer's Work Setting and Role	2
II STUDY OF THE PROBLEM	5
Problem Description	5
Problem Documentation	6
Causative Analysis	7
Relationship of the Problem to the Literature	8
III ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS	11
Goals and Expectations	11
Expected Outcomes	11
Measurement of Outcomes	12
IV SOLUTION STRATEGY	14
Description and Evaluation of Solutions	14
Description of Selected Solution.	18
Report of Action Taken	20
V RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	23
Results	23
Discussion.	29
Recommendations	32
Dissemination	33
REFERENCES	34

Appendices Page

A PRESURVEY FOR SIXTH-GRADE STUDENTS 36

B INTEREST SURVEY 38

C POST SURVEY FOR SIXTH-GRADE STUDENTS 40

D POST INTEREST SURVEY 42

E SURVEY FOR PARENTS OR GUARDIANS 44

F INTEREST SURVEY FOR PEER HELPERS 46

LIST OF TABLES

Table

1 Post Survey Results for Sixth-grade Students. . 25

2 Post Interest Survey Results for Faculty . . . 26

3 Results of Survey for Parents 28

Abstract

One role of the sixth-grade teacher in improving the transition of a transfer student. An orientation and peer helper program. Pettit, Nancy J. 1994: Practicum Report, Nova University, Ed.D. in Child and Youth Studies. Transfer Student/Mobile Student/Migrant Student/Peer Helper

This practicum was designed to reduce the problems associated with new students transferring into the sixth grade during the school year. Transfer students and their parents or guardians participated in an orientation and peer helper program designed to reduce academic, emotional, and social stress due to their change in environment.

The writer produced a video and a brochure for all transfer students and their parents or guardians to help them have a better understanding of the school's services, program's, and requirements. A peer helper club was designed to match the transfer student to a peer helper with similar interests. The peer helper served as a mentor and friend to help the transfer student with homework, classwork, and social activities.

There were eight transfer students who entered during the twelve-week implementation period. Only four students participated in the program because two were readmitted from the first of the year and two withdrew. Transfer students, their parents or guardians, and their teachers evaluated the program after twelve weeks. The majority expressed positive comments on the survey. All participates in the program liked the peer helper club best.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Community

This practicum has taken place in a public middle school in a rural community. There are four elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school which administers educational services to a population of approximately 27,000. In the last decade the migration population has increased by 70%. More than 20% of the households receive less than $10,000 annual income.

Industrialization is the major source of employment in the county. Along the western boundary of the county lies the largest textile producing county in the United States. There are over 100 carpet manufacturing plants in the surrounding counties and over 30 within the county alone. There are other textile and yarn manufacturers in the area. The availabilities of farm land makes agricultural production a means of employment. The population seems to be growing much faster than schools are being built. With the slow economy in other parts of the country, many people are moving into this area in order to secure employment. This migration poses many problems for the school systems around the textile

industry.

Even though many families are moving to the area, the minority groups remain low with only a few Blacks, Hispanics, and Orientals. The racial relations between students, families, and faculty are few or non-existent.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The school where this practicum took place is a middle school with more than 800 students enrolled. There are less than 40 faculty members, a media specialist, and one full-time counselor. There are three different grade levels, and at each level there are two teams made up of four teachers each. Each teacher on the team teaches four classes of either science, social studies, math, or language arts and one enrichment class. Team teaching offers many advantages for both teachers and students. Teachers can acquire power through teaming by increased decision making, scheduling, and mutual support in dealing with students and parents. Other benefits include reduced paperwork and increased communication and feedback. Team teaching offers teachers an opportunity to share the practical knowledge of teaching, which reinforces a sense of status that comes with expertise in any profession.

The middle school offers a variety of electives from which students can choose. These classes include: Art,

Home Economics, Latin, Computer Science, Music, Band, and Technology. Students are allowed to participate in one elective and one physical education class per six week period. Interdisciplinary units are correlated throughout the school environment.

The administrative team consists of one principal and one assistant principal to handle all the problems that arise with the massive enrollment. The administrative group is supportive of all the faculty, staff, and students. Excessive disciplinary problems involving students are handled by the assistant principal, but the principal intervenes when parents become involved.

Faculty turnover is increasing every year, but morale is still fairly good. The Board of Education for the county is working toward hiring more teachers to accommodate the overload.

The writer of this practicum is a sixth-grade science teacher whose primary duty is to provide appropriate learning experiences and educational opportunities based on each child's knowledge and plans for maximum development. Another major responsibility is assisting students in dealing with academic, personal, social, and vocational problems, which entails working closely with the guidance counselor and families to solve specific problems of individual students.

Maintaining proper discipline is also handled in the classroom by the teacher until the assistant principal is

brought in to resolve excessive disciplinary problems. Many situations occur when the writer must give standardized tests to students who exhibit behavior or learning disorders in order to place these students in a special education class for additional help in their troubled area. Counseling and special education classes sometimes aid in discipline problems.

The writer has an associate degree in computer science, a baccalaureate degree in business management, a master's degree in middle grade education, and an educational specialist degree in elementary and middle grade education. The writer continuously studies new ideas in the middle school curriculum and keeps abreast of the trends in the general field of education. The writer has been employed in the same county for five years and four of those were in sixth-grade science. During the prior years the writer worked in public relations communicating information in various organizations.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

Transfer, transient, mobile, and migrant students are labels used to identify students who have moved to a new community and a new school. Teachers of new students transferring into the school system during the school year were having difficulty meeting the needs of these new students while maintaining successful instruction for the classes they were teaching. New students were transferring into the school system without proper guidance, and were unaware of what was expected of them by their teachers and school as a whole.

The transfer students had no proper orientation before entering their new homerooms. Neither was there a program to guide them toward overcoming academic, emotional, and social problems which may have been associated with their new environment. Without being properly prepared, the transfer students were more likely to suffer academically, emotionally, and socially.

Most teachers were responsible for classes that were overcrowded, some containing as many as 39 students. With

the massive amount of students that teachers were responsible for, they could not maintain successful instruction for the class as a whole group while continuously having to orient the new students in the classroom requirements and procedures, as well as other areas of the school.

Problem Documentation

There were several documents of data which were taken from the writer's work environment showing evidence that problems concerning transfer students exist. A survey created by the writer was given to 280 sixth-grade students at the end of the 1992-93 school year (see Appendix A). The survey revealed that 52 of the students had moved at least one time during their K-6 school years. There were 35 who had moved at least two times, 15 who had moved at least three times, 14 who had moved four times, seven who had moved five times, four who had moved six times, one who had moved seven times, and two who had moved eight times during their K-6 school years.

Students involved in the survey implied in their comments they did not enjoy moving because they had to readjust and make new friends. Some students stated their grades suffered during the change and readjustment period.

Various faculty and staff members were given a written

survey created by the writer to complete at the end of the 1992-93 school year (see Appendix B). Many reported a need for a program to help new students adapt to their new environment. Teachers made additional comments regarding a need to alleviate the repetition of going over routine procedures in their classrooms.

A computer listing from the counselor's office documenting the entire school showed 82 students transferring from other school systems during the 1992-93 school year. The middle school was composed of six teams of teachers, two teams for each grade level. In the sixth grade alone, the computer listing showed 30 students transferring from other school systems for the 1992-93 school year. On the sixth-grade team of the writer, there were 21 new students transferring into the school system during the 1992-93 school year.

Causative Analysis

The problems of meeting the needs of these students on the move result from several causes. The parents or guardians of transfer students move because of divorce, career changes, unemployment, military transfer, immigrancy, migrancy, public school to private school transfer, school closing and various other reasons. Many times situations occur which force the family to move, but often the students

making the move are damaged academically, emotionally, and socially in the process.

The middle school is already over crowded, and with students transferring in every week, there is not enough teacher time to give each new student the proper guidance to ensure his success. Society expects school systems to handle problems that stem from constant mobility.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

Walling (1990) found that a wide variety of research indicates nearly one of every five persons in the United States will move every year. Many of these people have school age children. Anytime people undergo change in their lives, a certain amount of stress and problems adapting to the new environment is normal. However, many students were moved in and out of school systems without any consideration of the damage these transfer students suffered.

The average migrant students may be in three or four different schools a year because their parents are seasonal agricultural workers who follow the crop and harvest (Harrington, 1988). While migrant workers cannot control their type of work, the school system could be better prepared to help the migrant student as he enters his new environment for the first time. Harrington found that migrants have typically completed 7.7 years of school, and

it is estimated that 50% of migrant children will not complete school.

Some parents or guardians may be young adults seeking employment, or relocating for other job-related reasons. Persons between 25 and 35 are the frequent movers, regardless of their occupation. These young adults are also at the stage in life when they are most likely to have school-age children. Young parents are more likely to start out renting a home, until they purchase a home, which requires the family to move (Walling).

Usually by retirement age, most parents have raised their children to adults, but some have opted to marry and have children later in life. With retirement, some parents or guardians will find it necessary to relocate (Walling). However, there are fewer retirees with school-age children.

Another type of mobile family is associated with the government or the armed services. Military employees are one of the most mobile groups in the United States. Nearly two million children are affected by moves in the military. Children of military personnel have been known to move up to 10 times in 12 years (Walling).

Immigrants are another group that may require several moves to find work following their arrival to the United States. Also many immigrants may be employed as migrant workers requiring them to follow the crop and harvest (Walling).

According to Warren-Sohlberg and Jason (1992), surveys show people moving to get a fresh start, transferring from a public school, seeking a better place, and closing of schools. Research shows that Blacks moved most often because they were forced out of their homes, and less often, because of a need for a bigger house or job transfers. Whites on the other hand, moved for job transfers and bigger homes to accommodate their growing families (Warren-Sohlberg & Jason).

Other people who move more frequently are those around naval bases, prisons, and poor neighborhoods (Allan & Bardsley, 1983). Obviously there are many reasons to move, some better than others; however, young children should be taken into consideration as any move takes place.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The following goals are projected for this practicum. Transfer students and their parents or guardians will exhibit success during the transition period, and teachers would meet the needs of all students. The practicum involved many people; however, the main goal was to help students transferring into the sixth grade during the school year 1993-94. With the overcrowded sixth-grade homerooms, the practicum would help teachers stay on task for the previously enrolled students. It would relieve them teachers the repetition of the many rules and requirements of the class and school as a whole.

Expected Outcomes

The following outcomes are projected for this practicum:

1. The transfer students who participate in the practicum will indicate a positive attitude toward the new school and new people. They will have a better understanding of what is expected of them in academic classes. They will

also be more knowledgeable about various programs and services the school offers.

2. The teachers of the transfer students who participate in the practicum will indicate an increase in understanding of how the needs of the transfer students should be met. The teachers will devote more time to actually teaching their classes.

3. The parents or guardians of the transfer students who participate in the practicum will indicate a better understanding of the school programs, rules and regulations, and academic requirements. This practicum is for sixth-grade students and teachers, and if it proves successful, it can be implemented for seventh and eighth grades.

Measurement of Outcomes

The three outcomes listed above were to be measured in the following manner:

Outcome One - The outcome was to be assessed by using a survey with the transfer students of the school year 1993-94 at the end of the twelve-week implementation period (see Appendix C). The survey discussed what each student thought about the orientation and peer helper program for transfer students. A successful survey would show at least three out of five questions were answered with "yes."

Outcome Two - The outcome was to be assessed by surveying all sixth-grade teachers at the end of the twelve-week implementation period (see Appendix D). The survey discussed what each teacher thought about the orientation and peer helper program for transfer students. A successful survey would show at least six out of eight teachers answered "yes" to at least three out of five questions.

Outcome Three - The outcome was to be assessed through the use of a survey, which was completed by parents at the end of the twelve-week implementation period (see Appendix E). The survey discussed what the parents or guardians thought of the orientation and peer helper program implemented by the writer. A successful survey would show at least six out of twelve parents or guardians answered "yes" to at least two out of five questions.

Three surveys were selected and developed by the writer as a form of evaluation for this practicum. This form of evaluation is used extensively in education because of the wide range of educational problems that can be addressed (Borg & Gall, 1983). Many opinions emerge during the gathering of research. Using these three surveys, the writer could gather opinions from all who participated in the practicum, and therefore measure the positive and negative attributes involved.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solutions

Many solutions and strategies for helping transfer students and their teachers have been implemented with successful results. Research has proven there were positive results in different levels of education, from elementary through college. In some cases, students were forced to transfer to a new school environment in groups, as with school closings. With a group, students may bring their friends to offer support or help them adjust to the new school.

However, there were many who transferred to new schools by themselves and knew very little about the community or school. Students who were forced to make the move alone often felt they had no friends and no one to offer support through the transition period. To make the transition more successful teachers could assign each transfer student a "buddy" to help him cope with the transition and to offer guidance (Warren-Sohlberg & Jason).

The counselor was usually the first person the new student met when entering the new school environment. It

was the counselor's office where new students were enrolled and their records were kept for educators to view. Counselors could help transfer students adapt to their new environment in many ways. Counselors should meet with the transfer student, prepare the homeroom teacher, and be certain the teachers have the necessary skills to facilitate the child's adaptation to the class and school (Allan & Bardsley).

Transfer students need to have a feeling of belonging in their new environment. Many times it was hard to know and understand what a child was really thinking. According to Allan and Bardsley, a journal writing program enables the teacher to monitor current thoughts and feelings. The student was encouraged to record positive and negative feelings inside his journal. Both positive and negative feelings may be shared with the class by teachers. Sharing both types of feelings and thoughts helps students know that others have mixed feelings too.

Another useful strategy that would help students realize they were not alone with their problems was reading. The librarian may suggest books on moving that may be enjoyed individually or in group discussions. Reading books about moving to children and discussing the stories with the class helps children experience some catharsis, and may enable them to gain additional insight and empathy for students on the move (Allan & Bardsley).

Moving has different effects on everyone involved. Some family members may cope better than others during the move; however, transfer students may look at family members for strength and support in the transition. If the home situation is problematic, teachers may plan a home visit or a special parent night to help the whole family feel welcome (Allan & Bardsley).

According to Lane and Dickey (1988), educators could send the transfer students and their parents a letter welcoming them to the school and the community. They could also thank them for choosing this school for their education and offer to help in any way. Written communication is an easy follow-up method to ensure that the new student is coping with the new environment.

Peer tutoring and peer-led orientation techniques might be useful in helping transfer students face both academic and social adjustment tasks simultaneously. After orientation, through the aid of computers, the tutors and tutees work together selecting specific software appropriate to the need of the transfer student. Then tutors could instruct their tutees with the help of the computer software (Pillen, Jason, & Olson, 1988).

A map and a tour of the school may prove helpful in the get-acquainted stage for the new student. A large map could be posted on the bulletin board and used to pinpoint specific areas of interest at the school and around the community

(Allan & Bardsley).

Parents or guardians were the most important part of the transfer students' lives. Therefore, they could be more thoughtful and help their child be prepared for the "big" move. Parents can explain to the child why the move was necessary in the first place. Parents can help by bringing a special folder from the old school containing information about the child (Carlile, 1990). Parental involvement can help the child feel more loved and important. Educators could encourage parent involvement by inviting them to seminars on how to be a better parent.

According to Lash and Kirkpatrick (1990), the principal of the school can provide assessment and orientation through the front office. In many cases the school secretary or counselor will have a special orientation planned for new students and their families. In the majority of situations the counselor has the time and access to the new student and family to implement a program to help them feel welcome and experience success through the transition.

The transfer student has met many of the school faculty, staff, and students during the first few days. There is an avalanche of rules and requirements to remember. There was a wealth of learning during the readjustment period, but the greatest intellectual impact on students occurs outside formal classroom settings (Kramer & White, 1982).

Description of Selected Solution

The writer feels a need to incorporate several strategies to help each individual child who enters a new school environment. The move was brought on by various factors, some positive and some negative. Each child came in as an individual with a unique life and problems that should be handled the best way for the individual. There were about six or seven different strategies previously mentioned that are necessary to make a successful program for transfer students. However, there were other possible solutions that may become helpful in some cases. These strategies have been used to help the transfer student and their parents or guardians, their teachers, and their other classmates.

The educator has assigned a peer helper to each transfer student to provide a tour of the school and serve as a guide and friend to acquaint them with school activities, homework, classwork, and social activities. Peer helpers were matched with students by using a common interest survey developed by the writer (see Appendix F).

The middle school library has over 1,000 books to choose from, and among them are many books dealing with stressful situations for students. The librarian suggest books on moving to share and discuss with the class. The transfer

student needed to understand that he/she was not alone and many other students have had to deal with moving and making new friends.

The educator communicated with the parents or guardians both orally and in writing. It was important to understand the circumstances that generate a move; therefore, meeting and discussing the student with the parent was important. A meeting was set up by the counselor for the homeroom teacher and parent to meet during a convenient time. Follow-up letters, phone calls, or meetings were arranged for the first few weeks.

The counselor disseminated written information about the school and community at the time of enrollment. Students could call the counselor's office if they have any questions about the information. Also, if there was an unanswered question or problem of concern, they would call the counselor's office.

Many times it was hard to know and understand another person's feeling, therefore, all the students kept a journal. In this way the new student did not feel he had the only journal. A journal was used to disclose current feelings concerning the transition to the new environment. The educator became aware of any other problems not associated with making the adjustment and new friends.

The new students and peer helpers met once every week or two to discuss any problems encountered academically,

emotionally, or socially. They formed a club and named it "Eagles" so they could prepare themselves to help future transfer students make their transition more smoothly.

Report of Action Taken

The writer implemented several strategies to relieve the teachers of much repetition, so they could remain in the classroom instructing previously enrolled students. The writer implemented strategies that were designed to make the transfer student and their families feel more knowledgeable about the school, and experience a welcome feeling.

The writer made a video for all transfer students and their parents or guardians to view as they enter the new school setting. The video consists of the administrative offices, electives, programs and services, and sixth-grade academics for the middle school.

A brochure was also given to transfer students and their parents or guardians to follow up the video. The brochure served as a summary of the material previously viewed on the video. The counselor was given a sign-in sheet for the new students and their parents or guardians and they were required to sign after viewing the video and receiving a brochure. The sign-in sheet served as documentation for the writer.

Once every few weeks the transfer students met at

designated times, along with the writer and various students who wanted to participate in this practicum as peer helpers for the transfer students. An interest survey (see Appendix F) was given to both the new student and the peer helper candidates to match them with students of similar interests. The peer helpers served as guides and friends to help the transfer students with school activities, homework, classwork, and social activities.

During the implementation period there were only eight students admitted to the sixth grade. Two of them were readmitted because they had withdrawn from the first of the school year. Two of the students have already withdrawn, leaving only four new students. The writer, transfer students, and peer helpers met once every week or two for 15 minutes to implement various activities which helped them through the transition period. Instead of meeting every week the group met every week for the first few weeks and then met only when another new student was admitted. Since the group was small, the writer allowed the entire class to participate in the activities. Also, the transfer students did not feel they were the only students asked to do activities such as role playing, drawing, and journal writing, as a way of expressing their feelings.

During the first four weeks the transfer students were encouraged to write in their journal every week. After about two weeks the new students began to feel welcome and

expressed an understanding of what was expected of them from their teachers and school. Their peer helpers served as a helpmate and friend, and seemed to enjoy their job.

A bulletin board was not in the proposal; however, the writer thought a bulletin board would add motivation to the orientation and peer helper program. The writer used a bulletin board to introduce the students transferring into the sixth-grade to the previously enrolled students. The writer used the interest survey (see Appendix F) which was given to group the new student with a peer helper along with a photo of the new student to put on the bulletin board. The interest survey listed the new student's hobbies and special interests, along with their photo allowing other sixth graders to get acquainted with them. This activity excited most of the sixth graders and they were eager to become peer helpers.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

Teachers of new students transferring into the school system during the school year were having difficulty meeting the needs of these new students while maintaining successful instruction for the classes they were teaching. The transfer students were not undergoing an orientation program to guide them toward overcoming academic, emotional, and social problems which may have been associated with their new environment. The parents or guardians of the transfer students did not undergo an orientation program to help them have a better understanding of the school programs, rules and regulations, and academic requirements. The writer developed a sixth-grade orientation and peer helper program to improve the transitional problems of transfer students, their parents or guardians, and their teachers and classmates. A video orienting the new sixth-grade students to the school environment was shown to the student and their parent or guardian at the time of admission. A brochure was given to the parent as a follow-up to the video. As the transfer students entered their new homeroom they were

assigned peer helpers to aid in the adjustment to the new school.

The outcome for transfer students who participated in the practicum has indicated a positive attitude toward the new school and new people. They have a better understanding of what is expected of them in academic classes. They are more knowledgeable about various programs and services the school offers. Outcomes of new students were assessed by using a written survey (see Appendix C). The survey consisted of five questions that discuss what each student thought about the orientation and peer helper program. A successful survey shows three out of five questions were answered with "yes." All four new students took the survey and answered "yes" to all questions with the exception of one student to one question. The student commented that he had made friends before entering the school and said "no" to the question about the peer helper club helping him make friends. Refer to Table 1 for the results of the post survey given to transfer students.

The second outcome was for teachers of the transfer students who participated in the practicum to indicate an increase in understanding of how the needs of the transfer students should be met. The teachers have devoted more time to actually teaching their classes. The outcome was assessed by using a written survey (see Appendix D). The survey discussed what each teacher thought about the orientation

Table 1
Post Survey Results For Sixth-grade Students

	Yes	No
1. Do you understand what materials are needed to be prepared for each class?	4	0
2. Do you understand what your teachers expect from you in order to be successful in class?	4	0
3. Are the discipline procedures easy to understand?	4	0
4. Did you make new friends through the peer helper club?	3	1
5. Would you recommend new students join the peer helper club?	4	0

and peer helper program for transfer students. A successful survey shows six out of eight teachers answered "yes" to three out of five questions. All the sixth-grade teachers were asked to complete the survey and answered "yes" to four questions. The second question was answered "no" by all teachers with the exception of one teacher who answered "yes" to the question. She expressed a need to repeat basic

rules and procedures of her classroom to the transfer students. Refer to Table 2 for the results of the post interest survey given to eight sixth-grade teachers.

Table 2
Post Interest Survey Results for Faculty

	Yes	No
1. Was using a video to introduce transfer students to their new environment helpful in any way to your class?	8	0
2. Did you have to repeat basic rules and procedures of your classroom to the transfer students?	1	7
3. If a notebook was required for class, was it acceptable?	8	0
4. Did the transfer students seem to make new friends after entering the new school environment?	8	0
5. Would you like to see all transfer students go through this orientation program and have peer helpers?	8	0

The third outcome was for parents or guardians of the transfer students who participated in the practicum to indicate a better understanding of the school programs, rules and regulations, and academic requirements. The outcome was assessed through the use of a written survey (see Appendix E). The survey discussed what parents or guardians thought of the orientation and peer helper program which was implemented by the writer. A successful survey showed at least half the parents or guardians answered "yes" to two out of five questions. All four parents of the transfer students were asked to complete the survey. All five questions were answered with "yes" from all parents. Refer to Table 3 for the results of the survey given to parents or guardians of transfer students.

Table 3
Results of Survey for Parents

	Yes	No
1. Do you have an adequate understanding of what materials your child needed for his/her classes?	4	0
2. Do you understand the discipline procedures which will be followed at the middle school level?	4	0
3. Was the video helpful in being prepared for the transition?	4	0
4. After the first week of school was your child satisfied with the transition period?	4	0
5. Do you feel welcome in the new environment?	4	0

Discussion

The transfer students, their parents or guardians, and their sixth-grade teachers indicated from both written surveys and oral conversation a high rate of success after experiencing the orientation and peer helper program.

A journal was maintained by the writer during the time the program was being implemented. The writer used the journal to document both expected and unexpected situations. Several activities or strategies documented were used to help the transfer students understand they were not alone, and that many other students have had to deal with moving and making friends. Allan and Bardsley suggest reading and sharing the problems and solutions associated with other children as a source of successful counseling. There were about twenty books in the library dealing with the stress children feel in moving. Since the group was small in the peer helper club, the writer allowed students to volunteer to choose a book of their choice from the group of books. They were asked to do a unique book report using creative ways to present the problems and solutions associated with moving. Role playing was another method enforced to generate problems and solutions related to the stress students must overcome. The writer received many positive comments from students during the book reports and group discussion regarding the handling of problems associated

with moving. Most students enjoyed the book reports and role playing activities.

The first several weeks the writer communicated with parents or guardians both orally and in writing. Reasons for the move and any problems associated with the move were discussed. Educators need to have knowledge of the background of the new student to better help them adjust to their new environment. Many new students and their parents made positive comments regarding the interest educators and administrators took in the adjustment of their children to the new environment.

The previously enrolled sixth graders and the transfer students were asked to complete a written survey (see Appendix F) to match the new student with a peer helper who had similar interests. The survey consisted of questions relating to the students favorite subject, animal, movie, song, musical group, interest and hobbies. Most of the previously enrolled students were excited and wanted to become peer helpers. A peer helper's job is to assist new students with school activities, classwork, homework, and social activities.

A journal was maintained by the new students for the first few weeks. The entire class was asked to maintain a journal of their feelings and thoughts of school and friends. Many students participated and the new students did not feel they were the only students asked to keep a journal. Many

positive comments were made in the journal about the peer helper program. New friendships evolved and an interest to become future peer helpers grew from the program. According to Warren-Sohlbert and Jason the transition for new students was more successful when teachers assigned each new student a peer helper.

During each peer helper club meetings new students were introduced and encouraged to write in their journals. A discussion was generated regarding any problems or comments for the students transferring into the new environment. Each meeting the new student appeared to be more settled and comfortable with their school schedule and new friends. Various activities such as touring the school, role playing, and drawing were implemented to help transfer students cope with adjusting to their new environment.

Repetition and review are needed in many instances; however, repeating class requirements, expectations of teachers, and rules and regulations take away from teaching. Only one teacher expressed a need to repeat school and class expectations. The written survey (see Appendix D) indicated all the sixth-grade teachers thought the program was successful. Several teachers made positive comments and thought the peer helpers were the most effective part of the program.

The parent or guardian of the new students who watched the video and received a brochure made many positive comments

on the written survey (see Appendix E) and in oral conversation to the writer. The writer had several meetings with parents or guardians of the new students during the first four weeks. The parents thought the program was a great way to get oriented to the school and learn about the many programs the school had to offer. The last question on the written survey addressed why the parents chose this middle school over the other middle school. Most of them commented that they had checked out all the possibilities and felt the writer's place of employment was outstanding and challenging for their children's educational needs.

Recommendations

1. The writer is a sixth-grade teacher and worked hard to be sure the orientation and peer helper program was completely implemented. The program was successful and would benefit a counselor by orienting the parent and student to the new school. The counselor thought the program was an asset to his job and he has more time to implement the video, brochure, and peer helper club.
2. The writer recommends that the program continue the entire school year, because there would be a larger peer helper club, and because as new students become old students they can enjoy becoming peer helpers to other new students. They will have a better understanding

of the new students feelings and problems because they have already gone through much of the same problems.

Dissemination

The writer implemented the orientation and peer helper program for the sixth-grade transfer students only. However, plans for implementation of the program in the seventh and eighth-grade are presently being made. The program has been successful to the point that the principal insists the program remain for the entire school.

Parts of the program may also advance to the high school. In order to get into the student council at the high school a student must submit three creative ideas or improvements for the school. A sophomore at the local high school is planning to make a video of various school programs, activities, and procedures the high school has to offer new students. The video may be implemented as part of a program for new students in the high school.

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APPENDIX A

PRESURVEY FOR SIXTH-GRADE STUDENTS

PRESURVEY

ADMINISTERED TO ALL SIXTH-GRADE STUDENTS

1992-93

Name _____ Date _____

List all schools previously attended according to grade level on the blank space below. Briefly list any comments in the space provided.

Kindergarten _____

_____

Comments _____

First grade _____

_____

Comments _____

Second grade _____

_____

Comments _____

Third grade _____

_____

Comments _____

Fourth grade _____

Comments _____

Fifth grade _____

Comments _____

Sixth grade _____

Comments _____

APPENDIX B

INTEREST SURVEY

INTEREST SURVEY

PROGRAM FOR TRANSFER STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND STAFF

1992-93

Teacher ___ Other Staff ___ Grade Taught _____ Subject _____

Please rank the following issues according to how important you feel they are to new students transferring into the school system. (Rank from 1 to 5, with "highly important" being a "1" and "unimportant" being a "5")

_____ self-esteem _____ making friends

_____ peer conflicts _____ keeping friends

_____ grades and pressure to perform

_____ drugs & alcohol _____ cruelty

_____ stress _____ family problems

_____ sexuality _____ peer pressure

Other issues _____

Peer helpers forming a club for new students is a program consisting of proper orientation and guidance throughout the school and community. Peer helpers can help new students with issues and problems that are affecting them. They can help by listening, caring, and by helping them get acquainted with their new school and community setting.

Do you believe this type of program is desirable at this school? Yes _____ No _____

Please make any comments or suggestions on the back of this sheet.

APPENDIX C

POST SURVEY

FOR SIXTH-GRADE TRANSFER STUDENTS

POST SURVEY
FOR SIXTH-GRADE TRANSFER STUDENTS

Name _____ Date _____

Please answer the following questions concerning your personal feelings and understanding of your new school environment.

1. Do you understand what materials are needed to be prepared for each class?
   Yes _____ No _____
   If no, then why? _____

2. Do you understand what your teachers expect from you in order to be successful in class?
   Yes _____ No _____
   If no, then why? _____

3. Are the discipline procedures easy to understand?
   Yes _____ No _____
   If no, then why? _____

4. Did you make new friends through the peer helper club?
   Yes _____ No _____

5. Would you recommend other new students join the peer helper club?
   Yes _____ No _____
   If no, then why? _____

APPENDIX D

POST INTEREST SURVEY

PROGRAM FOR FACULTY AND STAFF

POST INTEREST SURVEY
PROGRAM FOR FACULTY AND STAFF
1993-94

Teacher ____ Other Staff ____ Grade Taught _____
Subject _____
After implementing an orientation program for transfer students and their parents or guardians, please answer the following.

1. Was using a video to introduce transfer students to their new environment helpful in any way to your class?
   Yes _____ No _____
   Comments: _____

2. Did you have to repeat basic rules and procedures of your classroom to the transfer students?
   Yes _____ No _____
   Comments: _____

3. If a notebook was required for your class, was it acceptable?
   Yes _____ No _____ N/A _____

4. Did the transfer students seem to make new friends after entering the new school environment?
   Yes _____ No _____
   Comments: _____

5. Would you like to see all transfer students go through this orientation program and have peer-helpers?
   Yes _____ No _____
   Comments: _____
   _____
   _____

APPENDIX E

SURVEY

FOR PARENTS OR GUARDIANS OF TRANSFER STUDENTS

SURVEY
FOR PARENTS OR GUARDIANS
OF TRANSFER STUDENTS

Please answer the following questions regarding the orientation program your child participated in during the first few weeks of his/her transition to the new school environment.

1. Do you have an adequate understanding of what materials your child needed for his/her classes?
   Yes _____ No _____
   Comments: _____

2. Do you understand the discipline procedures which will be followed at the middle school level?
   Yes _____ No _____
   Comments: _____

3. Was the video helpful in being prepared for the transition?
   Yes _____ No _____
   Comments: _____

4. After the first week of school was your child satisfied with the transition period? Yes _____ No _____.
   Comments: _____

5. Do you feel welcome in the new environment?
   Yes _____ No _____
   Comments: _____

6. Why did you choose this middle school?
   _____

APPENDIX F

INTEREST SURVEY FOR PEER HELPERS

SIXTH GRADE STUDENT

Student name _____ Date of Birth _____

Previous school attended _____

Address of previous school _____

Favorite subject _____ Favorite animal_____

Favorite song _____

Favorite singing group _____

Favorite movie _____

List hobbies:

_____

_____

_____

List special interests:

_____

_____

_____

Additional comments:

_____

_____

_____